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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents a method of teaching the history of labor unions in a creative and interesting manner. The labor pioneers presented in this booklet have been chosen with the thought that they would provide inspiration for young people who are studying the 300 years or more of Pennsylvania history. These laborers, who came from the ranks of the working people of Pennsylvania, organized and planned to provide for more dignity and more opportunity for working people. The format of each chapter is as follows: (1) a song, which could have been sung by the individuals featured in the chapter; (2) a story based on the life of the featured hero or heroine and a brief historical background of the period; and (3) discussion questions, activities, and sources. A cassette tape entitled "Sing a Song..." has been produced for use with this booklet. Labor pioneers featured include: (1) William Heighton; (2) William Sylvis; (3) John Siney; (4) Terrence Powderly; (5) Mary Hanaflin; (6) Mary Sterling; (7) Mother Jones; (8) William B. Wilson; (9) Benjamin Harrison Fletcher; (10) James Jones; (11) John Chorey; and (12) Mary Callahan. A glossary and teacher's notes follow the last chapter. (SM)

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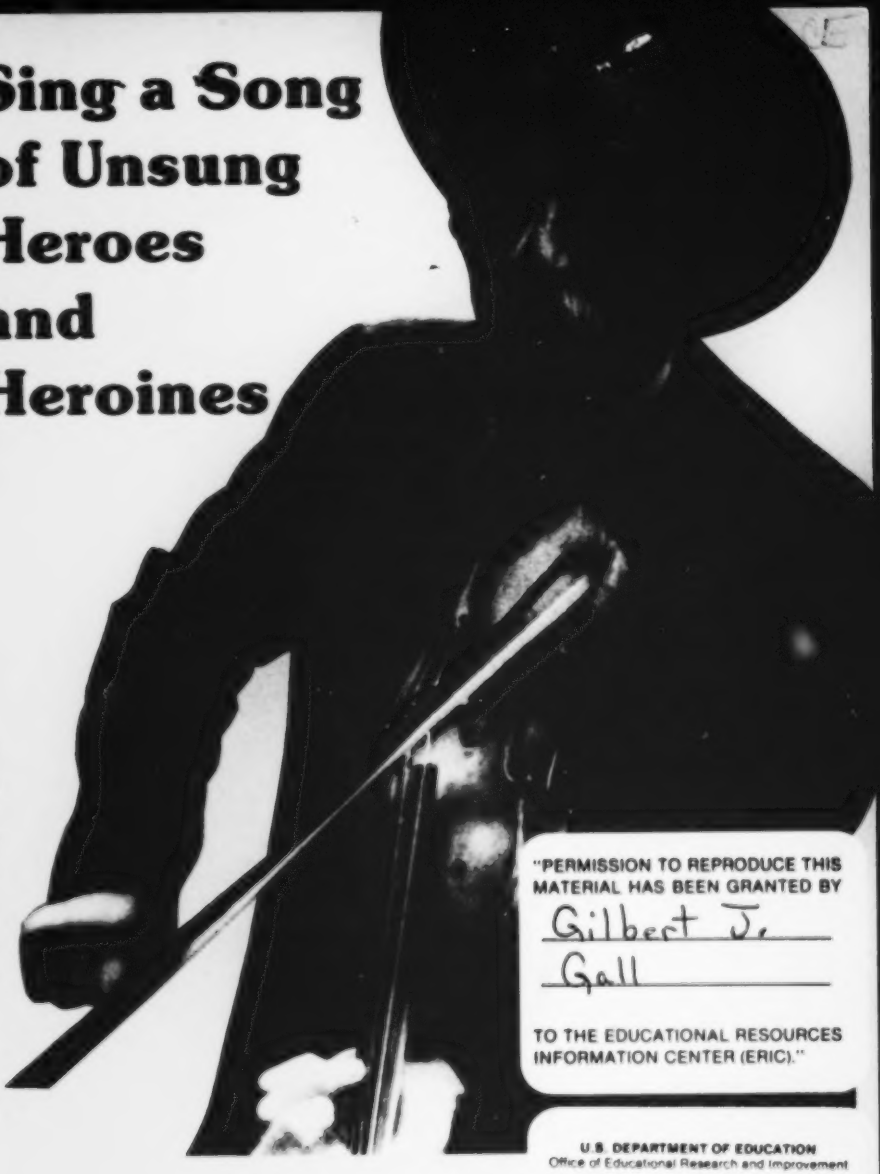
Sing a Song of Unsung Heroes and Heroines



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Sing A Song Of

Unsung Heroes And Heroines:

Stories And Songs Of Pennsylvania Labor Pioneers

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Preface

The labor pioneers presented in this booklet have been chosen with the thought that they would provide inspiration for young people who are studying the 300 years or more of the history of Pennsylvania and looking forward to and dreaming about the Commonwealth's fourth century.

Many of the individuals whose lives are presented here are not famous or well-known. They were individuals who have come out of the ranks of the working people of Pennsylvania. They dreamed of a better life for themselves and their fellow workers. Not only were they dreamers, they were also doers. They organized and planned to provide for more dignity and more opportunity for a sense of selfworth. They were concerned to create organizations to protect individuality in an increasingly industrialized society. Some of their ideas may now seem quaint and dated, but others are as fresh as tomorrow's newspaper.

We hope that students reading about and studying these lives will be persuaded that if William Heighton, Mary Jones, and Benjamin Fletcher could rise out of the ranks with ideas for change and with the self-discipline to get their ideas taken seriously, that they can do likewise. Young people also need to understand that solutions to problems don't come easily and they they don't come at all without dedication.

The format of each chapter is as follows: First, there is a song which could have been sung by the individual(s) featured in the chapter. A cassette tape has been produced for use with this pamphlet. The tape, *Sing a Song . . .*, includes a vocal and instrumental rendition of each of the songs, and can be ordered from The Department of Labor Studies, The Pennsylvania State University.

The song is followed by a story based on the life of the featured hero or heroine and a brief historical background of the period. Each chapter also contains suggested discussion questions, activities, and sources. A Glossary of terms follows the last chapter.

It is the hope of the author and her collaborators that these lessons will enable students and teachers to explore the contributions of labor pioneers to the history and development of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the nation.

Peg and Awl

—traditional

In the days of Eighteen and One, peg and awl,
In the days of Eighteen and One, peg and awl,
In the days of Eighteen and One,
Peggin' shoes was all I done,
Hand me down my pegs, my pegs, my awl.

In the days of Eighteen and Two, peg and awl(3x),
Peggin' shoes was all I'd do,
Hand me down my pegs, my pegs, my awl.

In the days of Eighteen and Three, peg and awl(3x),
Peggin' shoes was all you'd see,
Hand me down my pegs, my pegs, my awl.

In the days of Eighteen and Four, peg and awl(3x),
I said I'd peg those shoes no more,
Throw away my pegs, my pegs, my awl.

They've invented a new machine, peg and awl(3x),
Prettiest little thing you ever seen,
Throw away my pegs, my pegs, my awl.

Makes one hundred pairs to my one, peg and awl(3x),
Peggin' shoes it ain't no fun,
Throw away my pegs, my pegs, my awl.

This is one of a handful of early American labor songs. It is one of the first songs that documents the turmoil that results from the introduction of new technology into the workplace.

Source: Seeger, Pete and Robert Reiser. *Carry It On*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

William Heighton

Machines and the Shoemaker

On a Monday evening in early April of 1827, young William Heighton hurried to finish his work as a shoemaker. He was pegging shoes. He pushed a sharp pointed tool called an awl into the leather to make a hole and then used pegs to fasten the leather to the sole of the shoe.

He wanted to leave work early because he was planning to meet with a group of his fellow workers at the Reese School on Bread Street in Philadelphia. For weeks he had been going over and over in his mind the problems which he saw his fellow workers facing. New machinery was being used to make shoes. It makes one hundred pairs of shoes to the one I can make, he thought. A handmade pair of shoes costs twelve cents. A machine-made pair costs less, but not much less.

Where is the increase in wages for workers who now make so many shoes? Where are the jobs for workers displaced by the machine? The workers are not enjoying the benefits that the increased production should make possible. The machines should make it possible for the workers to work fewer hours. If they worked fewer hours, then not as many workers would lose their jobs. Instead, the machine has made it possible for the boss to sell many, many more shoes and the workers get nothing except fewer job opportunities.

He thought he had found an answer to these problems. Workers must organize, educate themselves and vote for leaders who would understand that working people need to reduce their hours of work. If they could reduce the hours of work, more workers could have jobs, then the machine would make life easier for the workers.

He worked long into the night on a speech called "An Address to the Working Classes." He was worried about this talk because he was not an educated man and had not been to school. The idea of speaking before a group made him nervous, but he felt that the justice of his cause forced him to try to do his best. He had rewritten his speech many times. He practiced over and over what he would say. But the thought of standing before a large group made his hands tremble as he put away his tools.

Out in the street a friend said, "Hello, William." But William did not hear him. The friend came nearer and shouted again, and this time William looked up and smiled. His friend, a neighbor who worked as a carpenter said, "William, are you so lost in thought that you didn't hear me?" William said, "Yes, I am trying to gather my thoughts for the meeting tonight, and I'm afraid that I may not speak well." "What, you not speak well? You talk all the time at our house," his friend teased. "Yes, but that is different," William said shyly.

Then, remembering his manners, he said, "What is new with you? I hope you are going to the meeting." His friend turned serious and said, "No, I cannot go. I must go to see about doing some extra cabinet work. There is no food at home since our father is not well. My mother is frantic about the cost of food and medicine for my father. Fortunately, father is also a carpenter and our carpenters' society has given us some money out of the sick fund, but it is not enough. My brother is an apprentice shoemaker, as you know, but he has been laid off because the new machines need fewer workers, so I must take on extra work to help them out."

"How can you do extra work when you work fourteen hours a day now?" asked William. "Well, I shall have to work on the cabinets at home by candlelight and on Sundays. Though Sunday is the Lord's day, I'm sure He doesn't want my mother and younger brothers and sisters to come to harm," his friend replied.

William said, "The meeting is to bring together all the city's trade unionists to fight for the ten-hour day." "Well, if that's your purpose, my prayers go with you. But remember, our carpenters' society also went on strike last year for a shorter working day, and we had little success." "Yes," William said, "I so well remember the parade with the carpenters swinging down Chestnut Street singing, 'Oh, dear, why can't we fix the hours of work from six to six.' We need all workers to come together, not just shoemakers and carpenters. If all the trades unite, then perhaps we can succeed." William shook his friend's hand and then hurried on.

When he arrived at the meeting, a large crowd from all the trades in the city had gathered, but he no longer thought of his fear of speaking before a large group. Instead, he moved to the front of the room; and as he began to speak, he thought of his friend wearing himself out just to be able to live. That thought gave him courage and he spoke without thinking of himself. When he finished speaking, he again had a moment of fear, for the crowd was silent. But then thunderous applause rose up and those in the front rows rushed forward in enthusiasm to carry William on their shoulders through the dark streets with shouts and cries of "union" and "working men unite." William Heighton had carried the day.

Historical Background

During colonial times before the American Revolution, there were no factories and very little machinery. Shoes, clothes, food, houses, and all the goods that people used, were made by hand. Skilled workers were divided into three types: masters, who often owned the shop; apprentices, who were learning the trades; and journeymen, who had learned the trade but did not own the shop or workplace. Where there were slaves, some learned skilled trades, and when they escaped or were granted freedom, they often migrated to cities where they continued to function as skilled workers.

During The American Revolution, demand for machine-made goods increased because the new nation could no longer obtain these goods from England. By the time the war was over, America had built many factories, forges and blast furnaces. Pennsylvania led the young nation and made more goods than any other state.

The Revolution also created inflation because goods were scarce and high in price. The new government tried to keep prices and wages down by special laws. But then, just as now, it was easier to keep wages down than it was prices. So at the end of the war, workers needed to increase their wages to meet the higher prices they had to pay.

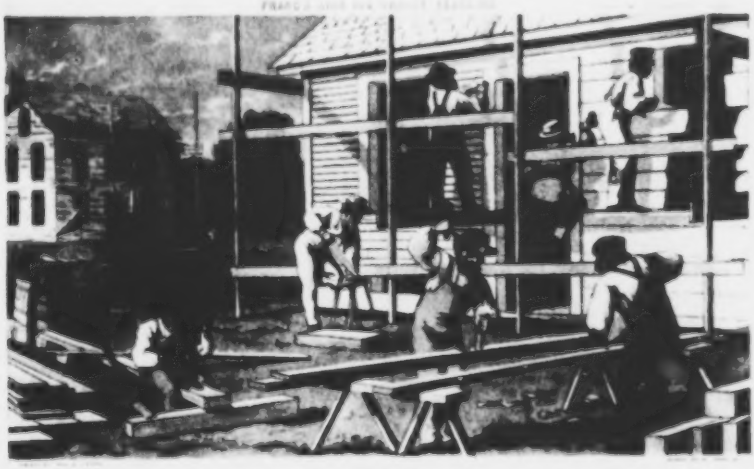
Philadelphia, the "Cradle of Liberty," was also the cradle of American unionism. The first strike for the ten-hour day occurred in Philadelphia in May, 1791. It was a strike by journeymen carpenters.

The first organization of journeymen was begun in 1792 by a group of Philadelphia shoemakers. Their organization lasted until 1806 when it was declared illegal by the courts. The courts continued to make it hard for unions to organize until the federal government passed the National Labor Relations Act in 1935.

However, the courts could not prevent the workers in a trade from forming small societies. Sometimes they met in secret to plan on how they could help themselves. One of the things they did was to collect dues which were used to help families where the father was sick or had died. Wherever they felt strong enough to do so or when times became too hard, they demanded, and often got, better wages, shorter hours, and improved working conditions.

Out of these local trade societies, an important step was taken with the creation of the first city central labor body, which was formed in Philadelphia in 1827. A central body is an organization of all the unions in a county or city. Each union sends a representative or a delegate to the central labor body.

The first central body grew out of the carpenters' efforts to obtain the ten-hour day. The carpenters felt that they needed to bring together all the skilled craftworkers to gain strength for their cause. They said that just as there must be a system of checks and balances in the government, so too there should be "a just balance of power...between all the various classes and individuals which (make up) society at large." Like all central bodies ever since, they were concerned about politics. They formed a Workingman's Party which helped to elect Andrew Jackson President of the United States in 1828.



One of the leaders of this first central body was William Heighton, a young shoemaker. He was born in England and came to America, like so many of our ancestors, seeking a better life. He found a job as a shoemaker in the Southwork section of Philadelphia. In 1827 he wrote a pamphlet entitled "An Address to the Members of Trade Societies and to the Working Class Generally." In the pamphlet, he argued for free public schools. In his day, schools charged a fee which working people often could not afford.

He also started a newspaper called *The Mechanics Free Press* and founded a library where workers could study and become familiar with the issues of the day. Unlike workers in other parts of the world at that time, male American workers who were not slaves could vote. Heighton thought that since free male workers could vote they should educate themselves by reading. Educated workers would be able to select and vote for candidates who would help them obtain a fair share of what they produced.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

1. What did the trade unionists in Philadelphia in the 1830s mean when they talked about a system of checks and balances between the classes in society, similar to the checks and balances in the government?

2. How can working people achieve a balance of power in a democratic society?

3. Why did early trade unionists emphasize education and libraries?

4. Do workers today still face unemployment caused by new inventions? Students could bring in articles from newspapers or magazines that illustrate this issue as it faces workers today.

5. The following are several quotations taken from William Heighton's "An Address to the Working Classes." Read these with your teacher and discuss what you think these words mean:

"We find ourselves oppressed on every hand. We labor hard in producing all the comforts of life for the enjoyment of others, while we ourselves obtain but a scant portion, and even that in the present state of society depends on the will of employers."

"The rapid increase of the working class, together with the introduction of labor-saving machines, will lessen the demand for manual labor and consequently diminish it in price."

"We yet possess the right of suffrage, the right of electing our own legislators."

"How long shall we suffer brainless zeal to take command of our sober senses and lead us headlong to espouse the cause of men who consider us unworthy of any further notice than to join our good will for the purpose of obtaining our votes?"

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The Blind Fiddler

—traditional

I lost my eyes in the blacksmith shop
In the year of Fifty-Six,
While dusting out a T-planch
Which was out of fix,
It bounded from the tongs
And there concealed my doom.
I am a blind fiddler and
Far from my home.

I've been to San Francisco
I've been to Doctor Lane;
He operated on one of my eyes,
But nothing could he gain.
He told me that I'd never see,
And it's no use to mourn;
I am a blind fiddler and
Far from my home.

I have a wife and three little ones
Depending now on me;
To share all my troubles,
Whatever they may be.
I hope that they'll be careful
While I'm compelled to roam.
I am a blind fiddler and
Far from my home.

Dating from approximately 1850, this song describes hazards of working in the early iron industry which flourished in Pennsylvania. When workers were hurt on the job, there was no insurance program or other programs to help meet their medical bills. Many were forced to become beggars or street musicians or to sell pencils just to stay alive.

Source: *Sing Out*, Volume 29(January-February, 1981), 1.

William Sylvis

I Love This Union Cause

It was dark in the Cresson foundry. The gas lamps gave out little light. A large furnace sat in the center of an enclosed shed. The furnace was used to melt iron bars into liquid iron. The men who fired the furnace were covered with soot. The hair on their arms was singed off by the intense heat. A group of men took the melted iron from the furnace in large ladles and poured it into molds to make the parts for iron stoves. As they bent over their hot work, the sweat poured down their faces and into their eyes. Even if it had been as bright as day, they could not have seen clearly.

One of these men, carrying a long ladle containing the white hot liquid to the table where the molds were set in sand, stumbled and fell. Suddenly the man standing next to him screamed and fell to the floor tearing at his boot. The hot iron had spilled from the ladle into his boot. Everyone around began to yell for help. The poor fellow who had the hot liquid iron poured into his boot passed out from the pain. One of the men produced a knife and cut off the boot. But it was too late; part of his foot was completely melted by the terrible heat.

The injured worker was carried home to his wife and two small children. His name was William H. Sylvis. As he lay in bed recovering, he heard a person in the street singing "The Blind Fiddler." He thought when a worker is badly hurt at work there is hunger in the house because his

wages are lost and there is no money to buy food or clothes.

When workers were hurt on the job there was no insurance program to help them pay their medical bills. There were no training programs for the handicapped. Many were forced to become beggars or street musicians or to sell pencils just to be able to stay alive. Sylvis began to read and study about this problem of workplace injuries and many other problems that he and his fellow workers were facing. He began to think that an organization of all molders might be the answer.

When he was well enough to go back to work, he found that the company had reduced the wages for all the employees at Cresson foundry. As he threw his ladle into the sand, his friend, Joe Barford, angrily said to him, "I will not make another mold at such low wages." William agreed with him and said, "We should get all the men to unite with us." In October of 1857, all the workers at Cresson foundry went out on strike, and William Sylvis became a leader in the labor movement. From that time on until his death, he devoted himself to the cause of working people. He said of the cause: "I love this union cause...I am willing to devote to it all that I am or hope for in this world."

Historical Background

From the 1830s to the Civil War, workers experimented with various ideas to win more dignity and better conditions at the workplace. They formed political parties. They bought and operated their own factories, and they formed clubs and organizations to help members who were sick and out of work.

At this time, canals and railroads were built so that goods made in one part of the country could be shipped across the state or across the nation. Employers began to organize trade associations to set prices for their goods which could be sold all over the country, rather than in one city or town.

The most important labor leader of this period was William H. Sylvis who saw that unions would also have to organize nationally if they were going to be effective. Sylvis was born in Armagh near Johnstown, Pennsylvania in 1828. William was the second son in a family of ten children. His father was a wagonmaker. Times were hard for the Sylvis family. In 1837 there was a severe economic depression and William's father could not find a job. So at the age of eleven, William was placed with a family that agreed to support him in exchange for his work. He lived with this family for the five years of his contract. He received little or no education beyond learning to read and write. He did not learn to spell, and his poor spelling embarrassed him all his life.

When he became a teenager, William decided to become an iron molder. Iron molding was a dangerous job. Iron bars were heated so hot that they melted. Then the liquid was poured by men called iron molders into a mold. In this way pots and pans, parts of stoves, and other products were made.

The places where iron molders worked were called foundries or furnaces. Some of these furnaces can still be seen today along highways in central Pennsylvania marked as historical monuments. One of the most complete restorations may be seen near Reading at Hopewell Village. There one can walk the streets of a foundry village as it was in the time of William Sylvis.

Foundries were often run like plantations. The workers lived in homes supplied by the company and made all their purchases at the company store. A worker at the time described it this way:

> "masses of men, bent to the ground...breathing air full of soot; their lives nothing but long hours of hot labor, sleeping crowded together in small rooms, eating bad pork and mollasses."

It was in 1854, after his second son was born, that Sylvis' accident occurred. When he returned to work, he became active in the union. He decided that the union should be a national, not a local organization. He called a convention of all molders in the United States, which met in Philadelphia on July 4, 1859.

By 1867 William had been elected to five terms as president and had built the most powerful labor union of his day. There were between six and nine thousand members. The Molders' Union was interested in owning and operating its own foundries instead of working for an employer. Molders operated a number of foundries in New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Missouri.

Just as he had seen the need for his own union to be organized on a national basis, Sylvis also thought there should be a national organization of all workers. He called all the unions to Baltimore in 1866 to form the first national federation of labor: The National Labor Union (N.L.U.). In 1868 Sylvis was elected president of the N.L.U. The organization grew largely because of his heroic efforts.

In July of 1869, as he sat at his desk preparing his speech for the convention that was to meet in August, Sylvis became ill. Five days later, on July 27th, he died. He was forty-one years old. The National Labor Union was not able to continue for very long without the dedicated and unselfish leadership that William Sylvis had provided.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

1. Why did William Sylvis want to start national unions?

2. Find out with your teacher what happens today when workers are injured while at work.

3. Discuss how work can be made more safe. What is the Occupational Safety and Health Act? Do you think William Sylvis would have approved of this legislation?

4. The class might want to consider a trip to one of the many remains of old iron furnaces which dot the map of Pennsylvania. Two of the most interesting are the Cornwall Iron Furnace near Lancaster and the Hopewell Village Furnace near Reading. Valley Forge was an old furnace and its remains can still be seen in the park. In fact, it was due to the importance of the furnace in producing cannon and balls that led Washington to march his troops from Germantown to Valley Forge to prevent the furnace from falling into the hands of the British.

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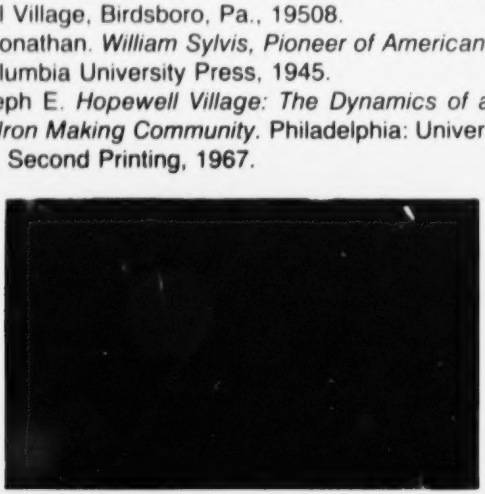

The Avondale Mine Disastor

—traditional

On the sixth day of September, Eighteen hundred and sixty-nine,
Those miners all then got a call to go to work in the mine;
But little did they think that day that death would gloom the vale
Before they would return again from the mines of Avondale.

The women and the children, their hearts were filled with joy.
To see the men go work again, and likewise every boy;
But a dismal sight in broad daylight, soon made them turn pale,
When they saw the breaker burning o'er the mines of Avondale.

From here and there, and everywhere, they gathered in a crowd,
Some tearing off their clothes and hair, and crying out aloud—
Get out our husbands and our sons, death he's going to steal
Their lives away without delay in the mines of Avondale.

But all in vain, there was no hope one single soul to save,
For there is no second outlet from the subterranean cave.
No pen can write the awful fright and horror that did prevail,
Among those dying victims, in the mines of Avondale.

Sixty-seven was the number that in a heap were found,
It seemed they were bewailing their fate in underground;
They found the father with his son clasped in his arms so pale.
It was a heart-rending scene in the mines of Avondale.

Now to conclude, and make an end, their number I'll pen down—
One hundred and ten of brave stout men were smothered underground;
They're in their graves till the last day, their widows may bewail,
And the orphans' cries they rend the skies all round through Avondale.

Written to a traditional Irish melody, this song describes one of the worst mining accidents in Pennsylvania's history. It caused such public outrage that legislation was passed to outlaw unsafe mines. Collected by the noted Pennsylvania folklorist George Korson, it is one of the best known and widely sun ballads from the Commonwealth's mining industry.

Source: Korson, George. *Minstrels of the Mine Patch.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1938.

John Siney and Terrence Powderly

The Breaker at Avondale

On September 6, 1869 at the Avondale Mine near Plymouth, Pennsylvania, a mining engineer named Alex Weir was horrified to see a blaze of fire hurtling up the coal breaker. A breaker is a tall structure rising up several hundred feet. It contains the pulleys and machinery for lifting, sorting and sizing coal to prepare it for market. The breaker at Avondale was built directly over the entrance to the mine, and there was no other way to get in or out of the mine.

Before he ran for his life, Alex managed to blow the breaker whistle. That whistle told all those, within the range of its sound, that there was a disaster. All who heard it dropped what they were doing and ran to the mine. On this September morning, the women and children who ran to the mine found a terrible fire burning that completely blocked off the entrance and trapped the workers in the mine.

The fire was finally put out and the union leaders organized rescuers to go down into the mine. They hoped that they would find that the trapped miners had been able to shovel a barrier of dirt and coal that would stop the fire and that they could be found alive behind the barrier. They did find a barrier, but the fire had moved so fast that the men had been unable to finish it, and they were found dead in positions that showed they had been overcome while digging the barrier.

One-hundred-and-ten lives were lost in the disaster. Perhaps the saddest sight of all was the body of John Burtch, found with his arm around the body of his son, John Burtch, Jr.

The news of this tragedy spread from town to town all over Pennsylvania. A young man named Terrence Powderly heard the story and decided to go to Avondale to listen to the speech of the miners' union leader, John Siney. Siney spoke to the stricken families and friends of the dead miners in Avondale.

John Siney came from St. Clair, Pennsylvania. He had organized the miners into a union called The Workingmen's Benevolent Association. On this September day, he stood on a hillside and said, "You can do nothing to win these dead back to life, but you can help me to win fair treatment and justice for living men who risk life and health in their daily toil."

Many years later Terrence Powderly described the effect that this speech had upon him. He said:

> I was just a boy then, but as I looked at John Siney standing on the desolate hillside at Avondale with his back toward a moss-grown rock, the grim silent witness to that awful tragedy...I caught inspiration from his words and realized that there was something more to win through labor than dollars and cents for self. I realized for the first time that day that death, awful death such as lay around me at Avondale, was a call to the living to neglect no duty to fellow men.

Young Powderly joined an organization called the Knights of Labor and came to be its national leader or Grand Master Workman, as the leader was called. Their slogan was "an injury to one is an injury to all." And from the moment when Powderly was inspired by the miners' leader, speaking out of the grief and pain at the loss of so many friends, he resolved to give his life to the cause of workers. He heard at Avondale a call to the living to work for the well-being of their fellow men and women. It was a call he answered for the rest of his life.

Historical Background

On a December evening four years after the Civil War, a small group of men who made men's suits met to discuss their problems at work. These men found the world changed dramatically from the one in which they had grown up. They had been used to working in small shops where the boss worked with them in the same room. Now they worked in a large factory where they seldom saw their boss; he was just a name to them.

The boss could cut wages and not see the effect on the workers' lives and homes. Workers formed a union called The Garment Cutters'

Association. But their employers refused to hire cutters who belonged to the union, so if they joined a union, they could no longer find work. A garment cutter was a skilled worker who cut the material so that it could be sewn into jackets and pants.

On this wintry evening, they met in secret to form a society called The Knights of Labor. They planned to hold meetings to educate one another about forming workshops that would be owned by the workers in the shop. Soon there were many such societies. The societies held secret meetings and had secret handshakes and special signs so that they could recognize other members. For instance, they had a special way of calling a meeting. Meeting times were chalked on plant gates or rocks like this: 7:22

$$\frac{8.00X}{300}$$

This meant that local 300 would meet at 8:00 p.m. on July 22. If the X was after the time, it meant p.m. If the X was in front of the hour, it meant the meeting time was in the morning or a.m.

At first The Knights of Labor grew slowly, but when Terrence Powderly became its leader in 1879, the organization grew more rapidly. Buy 1885 The Knights of Labor had 750,000 members and was able to gain a labor contract with Jay Gould who was called the "Wizard of Wall Street" because he controlled the nation's largest railroads. By this time The Knights of Labor was no longer a secret society.

The Knights of Labor was the first national labor organization to concern itself with the problems of women and minority workers. In 1885 it appointed a committee of three women workers to study the conditions of women in industry. These women were the only women delegates at the convention. Two of them were from Pennsylvania: Mary Hanaflin, a sales clerk, and Mary Sterling, a shoemaker. The next chapter tells their story.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

1. Why do you think The Knights worked so hard to maintain secrecy in their organization?

2. What were the advantages and disadvantages of secrecy? Why did they give up secrecy?

3. Discuss Terrence Powderly's idea that "there was something more to win through labor than dollars and cents for self." How do you feel about this?

4. When The Knights of Labor first organized, in addition to their secret code, they had secret signs and signals. Here is the secret code of The Knights.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
V ∀ A Λ W M N X O D C ᗡ B P I F ∃ H L E K T ⊥ Y Z ʎ

Perhaps you could write a secret message to your friend in this code.

5. Can you make a sign that tells that local 300 is meeting on September 1 at 9:00 a.m.? (See answer below.)

6. This is the Great Seal of The Knights of Labor. Perhaps you know some organizations or clubs that also have secret signs and signals. Discuss them with your class.

7. When The Knights first organized, in addition to their secret code, they had secret signs and signals. The following document describes some of them and gives the ceremony for starting a new assembly or club of the organization. With your teacher, you might put on a skit, pretending that you are starting a new local of The Knights, using the signs, symbols and code.

This Secret Work must be returned to the General Secretary-Treasurer, registered within sixty days after its receipt by you. DO NOT FORGET IT.

Secret Work and Instructions

We give you herewith the official and correct secret work for Locals. If there is any sign, grip or part of a grip, words or symbols, in use in your Local different from what you find laid down here, discard the same at once, no matter where or from whom received. It is not official or authorized. Give the secret work hereafter just as you find it here; give nothing that you do not find here, and there will be no trouble from lack of uniformity throughout the Order.

Entering Signal-Inner Veil

Three raps, given in this peculiar manner: One, a short pause-then two in quick succession.

Grip

The grip is to be made as in ordinarily shaking hands. The thumb to be placed over the fingers immediately back of the knuckles. Give one heavy pressure with the thumb, and, if returned, answer with two light pressures in quick succession without removing the hand.

The single asterisk or star stands for "thumb," thus: As the thumb distinguishes man, etc.

Sign of Intelligence

The Sign of Intelligence is made by placing the index finger of the right hand in the center of the forehead-the last three fingers of the hand closed over the thumb-back of hand to the front.

Sign of Recognition

Carelessly close the fingers over the thumb of the left hand and drop it to the side. The answer to be made with the right hand in the same manner. In case of doubt reverse the action.

Verbal Challenge

The following words are to be used when a member is seeking work or information: "I am here." A member replying to the challenge with: "You are welcome." Any other words may be used after the word "here" so as not to attract attention, as "I am here" on business, and the answer "You are welcome" to any assistance I can give you.

Cry of Distress

To be used in the dark or when the Sign of Recognition cannot be used. The words are: "I am a stranger," giving emphasis to the word stranger. Any member of the Order hearing this will answer, "A stranger should be assisted."

Caution-As the value of the Cry of Distress for practical use, depends entirely on accuracy of wording, great care should be exercised in instructing candidates, especially as great irregularity now exists. The words given above are all of the official work, although members are allowed to supplement the words given with others, so as not to attract undue attention from those not members, as, for instance: "I am a stranger, and need assistance." Answer-"A stranger should be assisted, and I for one am willing to help you." Any other similar additional words may be used, but when instructing candidates use care not to confound the official part with the unofficial.

Sign of Caution

Close three fingers of the right hand, leaving the thumb and index finger parallel to each other and pressed together. Bend the first and second joints of the index finger over the end of the thumb, and with the hand thus closed place it under the chin, which will thus rest upon the thumb and index finger.

These signs should not be used except in cases of absolute necessity.

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Factory Girl

—traditional

Yonder stands that spinning room boss
He looks so fine and stout
I hope he'll marry a factory girl
Before the year goes out.

CHORUS: Pity me all day, pity me I pray
Pity me my darling, and take me far away.

I bid you factory girls farewell
Come and see me if you can
Because I'm going to quit this factory work
And marry a nice young man.

No more I'll hear that whistle blow
The sound of it I hate
No more I'll hear the bosses say
"Young girl, you are too late."

No more I'll hear this roaring
This roaring over my head
While you poor girls are hard at work
I'll be home in bed.

This is one of the many versions of this song that describes the early days of the textile industry. It follows the tradition of a number of labor songs which instead of realistically describing the misery of the working conditions, lightheartedly pokes fun at the situation. In this song for example, it is unlikely that any of the women workers would marry a boss and be able to stay home in bed, which contributes to its humor.

Source: A version of this song listed under the title of "Pity Me, My Darling," is available in Seeger, Pete and Robert Reiser. *Carry It On.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

Mary Hanaflin and Mary Sterling

Two Noble Knights

It was 1886 when two young women stepped off the train in Richmond, Virginia. They were hot and dusty after the long ride from Philadelphia. They looked about, uncertain what to do next, but one of them saw a taxi cab and said, "Come on, Mary, we will have to take a cab since we don't know where the meeting hall is." The other young woman protested that a cab would cost too much and they had better walk. But she gave in to her friend's suggestion and they asked the driver to take them to The Knights of Labor Convention.

When they reached the hall they pushed their way through a crowd of men who gave them puzzled looks as they marched up to a table where a man sat with a large book containing the names of the delegates to the convention. When they told him their names he made no effort to look for their names in the book; instead he asked them who they wanted to see. They said, "We are Mary Hanaflin and Mary Sterling from Philadelphia." Still he did not look for their names in the book, but again asked them who they wanted to see.

The taller of the two young women said, "Excuse me, sir, but our names are in the book. We are from the local union in Philadelphia, and you shall soon remember us, for we are here to represent working women in this Noble Order." At last he looked in the book and seemed much surprised to find their names listed. As he gave them each a badge to show that they were in fact delegates to the convention, he said almost to himself, "I didn't know we had girls coming to our meetings."

Mary Sterling startled him by responding, "Well, there will be sixteen of us here this year so perhaps you should get used to it. And we intend to make our voices heard on behalf of the many women and girls who work in factories and shops. Equal pay for equal work will be our slogan, sir." He looked up at the two young determined faces before him, smiled, and said, "Well, by golly, if spunk and grit will do the job, I guess you two will certainly be heard from." Both Marys looked at each other and laughed. "I guess we've got the grit from the railroad all over us," they said, "but we have a report for the convention, and I'm sure it will be heard."

Their report was heard. Mary Hanaflin spoke well. She told the delegates that it was critical to improve conditions for working women because

they had found that women worked an average of ten hours a day for $5.00 a week and that child labor laws were being ignored. She also told them that in their investigation they had found young girls working in a factory in Philadelphia who were fined ten cents for laughing, eating, singing or talking on the job. They found workers who, if they were only one minute late, were locked out of the factory and lost their pay for the day.

Mary called on The Knights of Labor to conduct a thorough investigation of the conditions of working women, to publicize those conditions widely, and to make an all-out attempt to recruit women as members.

The delegates heartily agreed with the committee. They voted to create an Office of General Investigation and appointed Leonora Barry, a hosiery worker, as the investigator. Barry was commissioned to "go forth and educate sister working women and the public generally as to their needs and necessities."

Historical Background

The early labor unions were made up mostly of white males. Many union members believed that women should not be in the union. They felt that women should be in the home. But by 1880 well over two million women and girls were working. In fact, ten percent of all workers were women. Factory work required less skill, and young women and girls could be hired for less money.

The Knights of Labor believed that people should receive "equal pay for equal work." This included women. Still, many of the union men felt

women were too weak to do much. But in 1881, after male shoemakers refused to accept a cut in wages, the employers lowered the wages of the women who were not in the union. Mary Sterling, a Philadelphia shoe worker, led the women out on strike. Thus, the local union leader asked all the women to join The Knights of Labor. However,the women had their own separate group or assembly. Mary Sterling was elected an officer in the union. Within five years The Knights had 121 special women's groups.

As the investigator for the Office of General Investigation, Leonora Barry educated other working women and the public as to women's working conditions and the rights of women workers. Leonora came to New York from Ireland when she was three years old. Later, as a young widow with two children, she worked in a hosiery mill for sixty-five cents a day. She thought it impossible to raise her children on such low wages. She heard about The Knights of Labor and their idea of "equal pay for equal work." She joined and soon became an active union member and officer. This is why she was chosen to be the investigator.

It is not easy for women to gain equal rights in our world today. It was a lot harder a hundred years ago. Leonora Barry, Mary Sterling and Mary Hanaflin were willing to work for what they believed. Democracy grew a little because they were brave enough to risk being unpopular - to speak up for women's rights.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

1. Why wouldn't the man at the convention look in the book of delegates for Mary Hanaflin's and Mary Sterling's names?

2. Do women receive equal pay for equal work today? Tell why you think they do or why you think they do not.

3. Ask your teacher about "pay equity." What does the term mean? You might arrange a debate on this topic in your school, or ask a trade union member to come to the school to talk on this topic.

4. Discuss the song "Factory Girl." Do you think the girl in the song will be able to leave the factory by marrying the boss? Find out how many mothers of children in your class work outside the home. What kind of jobs do they have?

Source

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Babies in the Mill

—Dorsey Dixon

I used to be a factory hand,
When things were moving slow,
When children worked in cotton mills,
Each morning had to go.
Every morning just at five,
The whistle blew on time,
And called the babies out of bed,
At the age of eight and nine.

CHORUS: Get out of bed, little sleepy head,
And get your bite to eat
The factory whistle's calling you
There's no more time to sleep.

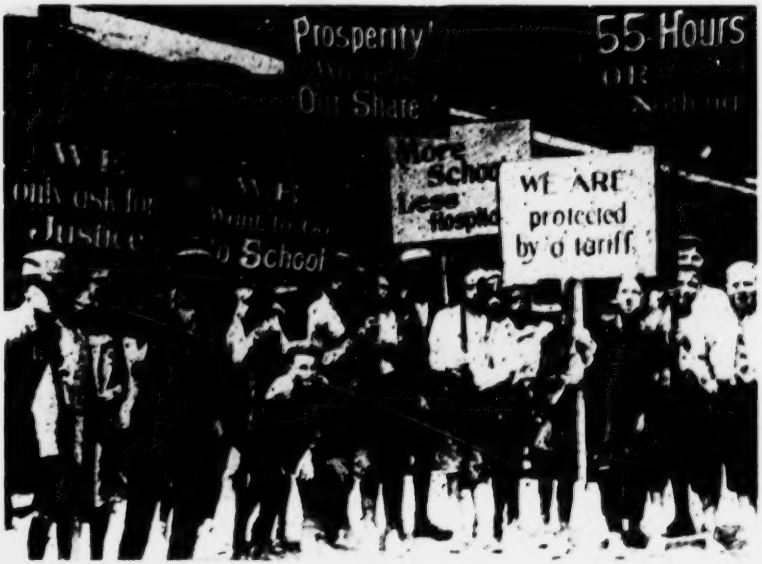
The children all grew up unlearned
They never went to school.
They never learned to read or write,
But learned to spin and spool.
Every time I close my eyes,
I see that picture still.
When textile work was carried on,
With babies in the mill.

Old timer can't you see that scene,
Back through the years gone by.
Those babies all went on the job,
The same as you and I.
I know you're glad that things have changed,
While we have lots of fun.
While we go in and do the jobs,
That babies used to run.

© 1950 Dorsey Dixon.

Dorsey Dixon and his brother Howard were a popular country music duet in the 1930's. The Dixon Brothers as they were known, wrote and popularized a number of songs, including; "Weave Room Blues," and "I Didn't Hear No Body Pray," that have become part of the standard country music repertoire. Despite their popularity they were never able to generate enough income from music to free them from working in the textile industry. Dorsey wrote this song in 1950 recalling his boyhood experiences in the mill.

Source: Seeger, Pete and Robert Reiser. *Carry It On.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.



34

Mother Jones

The March of the Children

Mary Harris Jones was born in Ireland in 1830. She came to this country as a young child and married a coalminer. All her family, her husband and her four children, died in a yellow fever epidemic in 1867. So Mary Jones declared that the coalminers and working people everywhere were her children, and they accepted and loved her and called her Mother Jones.

She traveled everywhere in support of workers' efforts to improve their lives. In 1903 she was in Philadelphia helping a group of textile workers who were striking a textile mill in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. She was deeply distressed to find that 10,000 of the workers were children and that many of them worked long hours and had been injured by the mill machinery. She decided to organize a March of the Children from Philadelphia to see President Theodore Roosevelt in his summer home on Long Island. Her description of the march appeared in her autobiography:

> In the spring of 1903 I went to Kensington, Pennsylvania where seventy-five thousand textile workers were on strike. Of this number at least ten thousand were little children. The workers were striking for more pay and shorter hours. Every day little children

came into Union Headquarters, some with their hands off, some with the thumb missing, some with their fingers off at the knuckle. They were stooped little things, round shouldered and skinny. Many of them were not over ten years of age, although the state law prohibited their working before they were twelve years of age.

The law was poorly enforced and the mothers of these children often swore falsely as to their children's age. In a single block in Kensington, fourteen women, mothers of twenty-two children all under twelve, explained to me (that their husbands had been killed or maimed in the mines and that) they needed the wages of their children in order to survive.

I asked some of the parents if they would let me have their little boys and girls for a week or ten days, promising to bring them back safe and sound. They consented. A man named Sweeny was marshall for our "army." A few men and women went with me to help with the children. They were on strike and I thought they might as well have a little recreation.

The children carried knapsacks on their backs in which was a knife and fork, a tin cup and plate. We took along a wash boiler in which to cook the food on the road. One little fellow had a drum and another had a fife. That was our band. We carried banners that said, "We want more schools and less hospitals." "We want time to play." "Prosperity is here. Where is ours!" We started from Philadelphia where we held a great mass meeting. I decided to go with the children to see President (Theodore) Roosevelt to ask him to have Congress pass a law prohibiting the exploitation of childhood. I thought that President Roosevelt might see these mill children and compare them with his own little ones who were spending the summer on the seashore at Oyster Bay.

The children were very happy, having plenty to eat, taking baths in the brooks and rivers every day. I thought when the strike is over and they go back to the mills, they will never have another holiday like this. All along the line of march the farmers drove out to meet us with wagon loads of fruit and vegetables. Their wives brought the children clothes and money. The interurban trainmen would stop their trains and give us free rides.

We were on the outskirts of New Trenton, New Jersey, cooking our lunch in the wash boiler, when the conductor on the interurban car stopped and told us the police were coming down to notify us that we could not enter the town. There were mills in the town and the mill owners didn't like our coming.

I said, "All right, the police will be just in time for lunch." Sure enough, the police came and we invited them to dine with us. They looked at the little gathering of children with their tin plates and cups

around the wash boiler. They just smiled and spoke kindly to the children, and said nothing at all about not going into the city.

We went in, held our meeting, and it was the wives of the police who took the little children and cared for them that night, sending them back in the morning with a nice lunch rolled up in paper napkins. Everywhere we had meetings, showing up with living children, the horrors of child labor....

We marched to Twentieth Street (in New York City). I told a large crowd of the horrors of child labor in the mills around the coal region and I showed them some of the children. I showed them Eddie Dunphy, a little fellow of twelve, whose job it was to sit all day on a high stool, handing in the right thread to another worker. Eleven hours a day he sat on the high stool with dangerous machinery all about him. All day long, winter and summer, spring and fall, for three dollars a week. And then I showed them Gussie Rangnew, a little girl from whom all the childhood had gone. Her face was like an old woman's. Gussie packed stockings in a factory, eleven hours a day for a few cents a day.

We raised a lot of money for the strikers and hundreds of friends offered their homes to the little ones while we were in the city. The trouble is that no one in Washington cares. I saw our legislators in one hour pass three bills for the relief of the railways but when labor cries for aid for the children they will not listen.

I asked a man in prison once how he happened to be there and he said he had stolen a pair of shoes. I told him if he had stolen a railroad he would be a United States Senator. We marched down to Oyster Bay (but we did not see the President). But our march had done its work. We had drawn the attention of the nation to the crime of child labor. And while the strike of the textile workers in Kensington was lost and the children driven back to work, not long afterward the Pennsylvania legislature passed a child labor law that sent thousands of children home from the mills, and kept thousands of others from entering the factory until they were fourteen years of age.

Historical Background

The factory system took the task of making something and broke it up into many small parts. Instead of having a worker make an entire shoe, for instance, the factory system required the worker to tend a machine which did one small part of making a shoe. This made it possible for factories to hire unskilled workers, including women and children.

The first textile mill built in America by Samuel Slater in 1791 was run by nine children who worked fourteen hours a day, six days a week. In

1832, it was estimated that two-fifths of all the working people employed in manufacturing were children. In the South, children were forced to pick the cotton which was used to make cloth in the textile mills.

By the 1880s, many children were working in the cotton fields, mines, mills, and factories. They were hired in large numbers because they could be paid less than skilled workers. As one mill owner said, "Why hire a man for a dollar, when you can get a kid for a dime?" Some states began to pass laws that prevented children under fourteen from working long hours in factories.

In 1903 during a textile mill strike, Mother Jones found a little girl nine years old who had already been working for a year in the textile mills of Kensington, Philadelphia. She decided to gather these working children together to march to Theodore Roosevelt's home on Long Island, so that the President could see these poor children who worked long hours in the mills.

In 1904 a National Child Labor Committee was formed to protest the use of child labor. The Committee hired a famous photographer, Lewis Hine, to take pictures of small children at work. The pictures Lewis Hine took of children working at the breakers in coal mines showed that they were being badly hurt by their work. Breaker Boys, as they were called, sat over the chutes that moved the coal to the place where it was washed. Their job was to pick out the slate and rock that had gotten mixed in with the coal. They would sit in clouds of coal dust, and very often their hands were cut, fingers broken or crushed by the coal. Sometimes boys fell into the machinery or the chute and were killed. Children were also hired in the mines to drive the mules that hauled the coal, and to open and close trap doors in the mine.

One member of the National Child Labor Committee described the work of a trap boy:

> Think of what it means to be a trap boy at ten years of age. It means to sit alone in a dark mine hour after hour, with no human soul near; to see no living creature except the mules as they pass with their loads, or a rat or two seeking to share one's meal; to stand in water or mud that covers the ankles, chilled...by the cold when you open the trap door for the mules to pass through; to work for fourteen hours—waiting—opening and shutting a door—then waiting again—for sixty cents (a day).

Finally, in 1916, Congress passed the first federal law covering child labor. It said that children must be sixteen years or older to work in the mines and that they must be fourteen years of age or older to work in any factory. It also stated that children between the ages of fourteen and sixteen could not work more than eight hours in any one day. But the Supreme Court declared this law unconstitutional. In the meantime, some states passed laws to protect children from long working hours and dangerous working conditions, and twenty-seven states passed laws that required children to attend school.

It wasn't until 1938 that Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, which finally ended child labor in mines and factories. But children, even today, are still working on farms picking fruit and vegetables so that in some places the fight to protect children still goes on.

It has been a long struggle to gain the freedom for children that Mother Jones wanted them to have. She wanted children to go to school and to play. She wanted them to be free to develop their minds and their bodies. She thought children's work should be school work so that they could grow up strong and healthy.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

1. Do you think these children were labor pioneers?

2. If you worked in the textile mill, would you have asked your parents to let you go in the march with Mother Jones? Why or why not?

3. Do children work in mills, factories, mines or stores now? How did the rules covering child labor come about?

4. Do you think children should go to work? What rules would you make and why?

5. Explain the idea behind the statement, "why hire a man for a dollar, when you can get a kid for a dime."

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Breaker Boy

— Glen R. Plummer

Breaker Boy, Breaker Boy, tell me your name
Lift you eyes and look at me.
You need not be ashamed
Does your brother work like you?
And is your sister lame?
Tell me of your life, Breaker Boy?

Breaker Boy, Breaker Boy, does your mamma pray?
Is your daddy round and bent
From diggin' coal all day?
Will black gold suck the breath from you?
Is life the price you pay?
Is that how it is with you, Breaker Boy?

CHORUS: Little children, working in the mine,
Should be playing, having a good time.
Should be learning, stretching out the mind.
There's more to life than coal, Breaker Boy.

Breaker Boy, Breaker Boy, I know why you toil,
To help to feed your family,
You pick slate from the coal.
The mine becomes your life,
And operators want your soul,
A story sad but true, poor Breaker Boy.

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This song describes the work done in the Anthracite coal region in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. During this period coal companies employed young boys to "clean" the coal by picking out pieces of rock that remained from mining.

Source: This song is currently unpublished.

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A Miner's Life

— traditional

A miner's life is like a sailor's
'Board a ship to cross the wave;
Ev'ry day his life's in danger;
Still he ventures, being brave.
Watch the rocks, they're falling daily;
Careless miners always fail:
Keep your hand upon the dollar,
And your eye upon the scale!

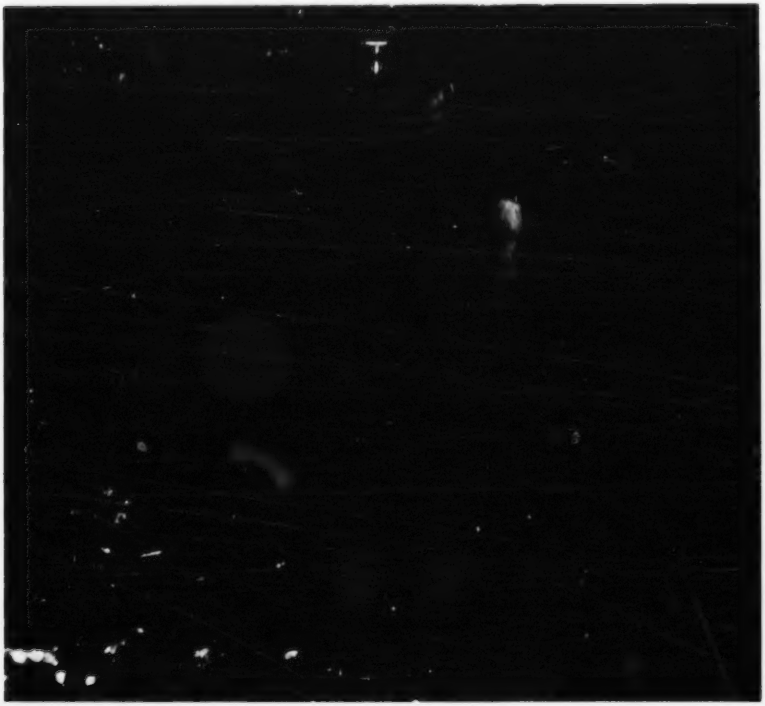
CHORUS: Union miners, stand together!
Heed no operator's tale;
Keep your hand upon the dollar,
And your eye upon the scale!

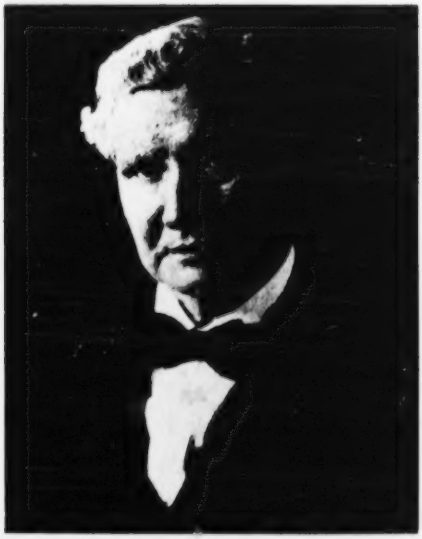
You've been docked and docked again, boys,
You've been loading two for one.
What have you to show for working
Since this mining has begun?
Worn-out boots and worn-out miners,
And your children growing pale:
Keep your hand upon the dollar,
And your eye upon the scale!

In conclusion, bear in mem'ry,
Keep this password in your mind:
God provides for ev'ry worker
When in union they combine.
Stand like men, and linked together
Vict'ry for you will prevail:
Keep your hand upon the dollar,
And your eye upon the scale!

Written to the tune of the traditional song "Life is Like a Mountain Railway," this is another song collected by George Korson. Dating from the first part of the twentieth century it was sung by miners in Nova Scotia as well as in the British Isles. The warning in the chorus to "keep your eye upon the scale" refers to the coal owners' practice of underweighing the miners' coal cars before the union succeeded in appointing a union checkweighman.

Source: Seeger, Pete and Robert Reiser. *Carry It On.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.





William B. Wilson

Watch The Rocks,
They Are Falling Daily

Young William Wilson was eight years old when he first arrived with his family from Scotland in Arnot, Pennsylvania, which is in what is called the "endless mountains" of Pennsylvania. When he first arrived in this country he went to school. He was eager to learn and soon became a leader of the boys on the playground. He also worked for neighbors running errands. After a long while he had saved two dollars. His parents let William decide how to spend the money.

He bought a second-hand book called *Chamber's Information for the People*, which he read to his father, who could not read even though he was very intelligent. About this time his father began to have back trouble and difficulty breathing. His father was finding it very hard to mine enough coal to support his family, which was the only work he had been trained to do. For many nights the parents talked about what they could do. Finally, even though they wanted their son to be educated, they agreed there was nothing left to do except to ask William to leave school and help his father in the mine.

So when William was nine years old, he went to work with his father in the coal mine. They left the house, which was rented to them by the coal company, before dawn and returned from work ten to twelve hours later.

All day William lifted the pieces of coal that his father had dug out and dumped them into the cars that carried the coal to the surface.

One day they were digging coal underneath a ledge of rock. The rock seemed as though it might fall so this father cut a timber and placed it under the rock to hold it up. The space was small so William had to crawl under the rock to dig the coal. Suddenly the timber moved and down came the rock on William. His father screamed, "Willie, Willie!" and ran for help, thinking his boy was crushed by the rock. Somehow, the prop kept the rock from falling on him, but he was trapped and could not crawl out. His father brought back other miners to help dig him out. Willie was trapped there for a long time before he was freed.

What was it like to work in an underground mine? Here is a description from a book called *William B. Wilson and the Department of Labor* by Roger W. Babson:

> An underground mine becomes an underground city with streets and passages—often on different levels. In digging out the coal, the miner must often sit, crouch, or even lie in an uncomfortable position for hours, wielding his pick to get out the coal. Machines have been invented for cutting coal when found under certain conditions. But even where machines are used, the beginning must usually be made by hand, and in many places it is not possible to use the machines.
>
> The mine that little William Wilson worked in was not better or worse than others of its kind. Mines are full of dangers, and one hundred years ago there were not many of the safety inventions that miners can now use. Dangerous gases are underground, and digging for coal frees them. The danger of explosions is great. The slightest breath of an open light causes the gases to explode, and then partitions are burned away, smoke and fire roll through the passages, telling the workers above that their fellows are being suffocated or buried alive.

William Wilson once told of such an incident. The alarm bell rang to tell of a miner trapped beneath a rock fall. Wilson started for the rescue with two other miners. As they began to dig they could hear other rock slides falling, making a sound like the booming of cannons. Boom! Boom! All around them. But they kept digging. Once they thought they heard the trapped miner cry out "Hurry, boys, for God's sake, hurry!" When they uncovered him he was sitting on the floor of the mine with his knees drawn up to his chest. He was dead! When they got him up and out of the mine in the light and air, William Wilson found that it was a friend named William Hogan.

Historical Background

William B. Wilson was born in Scotland on April 2, 1862 and came to America with his parents soon after the Civil War. He worked with his father in the coal mines and was elected secretary of his local union when he was fifteen years old.

In 1890 he worked with John Mitchell to set up a national union of coal miners, The United Mine Workers of America, and in 1902 he was elected national secretary of the union. Wilson was the first United States Secretary of the Department of Labor. He was appointed to that position by President Woodrow Wilson in 1913 and was the first representative of working people to serve on a President's cabinet.

After Woodrow Wilson became President, a number of reforms were instituted to aid workers. A bill was passed which said that children should not work in mines and factories. The Clayton Act was passed which stated that labor unions were not illegal. William Wilson worked to get these laws passed. He also set up the U.S. Employment Service which helps unemployed workers find work and administers funds to pay them a part of their wages while they are looking for new jobs.

William Wilson set up boards to help resolve differences between workers and their employers. He was Secretary of Labor during World War I, and created for the first time Boards with representatives from government, labor and business. Wilson worked hard to see to it that workers were treated fairly and that labor would work hard to help win the war. He achieved a great deal of success in working towards these goals.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

1. Students who live close enough to one of the miner's museums in Pennsylvania may wish to take a trip to visit one of these sites. The Anthracite Museum complex in Scranton includes a working coal mine and a recreated miners' village. Consult Scranton Anthracite Museum, RD #1, Bold Mountain Road, Scranton, PA. 18504 (717) 961-4804.

   The city of Johnstown also has an exhibit on coal mines in their Flood Museum: Johnstown Flood Museum, 304 Washington Street, Johnstown, PA. 15901.

   In addition, there are exhibits on coal mines and coal miners at the following locations: Lackawanna County Historical Society, 232 Monroe Avenue, Scranton, PA. 18510; Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, 69 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA. 18701; Pioneer Tunnel & Lokie, Ashland, PA. 17921; the Mineral Industrial Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. 16802.

2. Prepare a skit on the coal miners' life underground. Perhaps you could write a play based on an effort to rescue miners trapped underground.

3. Why did miners sing a song in which they urged one another to keep their "hands upon the dollars and their eyes upon the scale?"

4. Why do you think William Wilson's father was unable to read?

Source

Babson, Roger Ward. *William B. Wilson and the Department of Labor.* New York: Brentano's, 1919.

We Shall Overcome

— traditional

We shall over overcome, we shall overcome,
We shall overcome some day,
Deep in my heart, I do believe,
We shall overcome some day.

We shall live in peace, we shall live in peace.
We shall live in peace, some day.
Deep in my heart, I do believe,
We shall overcome some day.

We shall all be free, we shall all be free
We shall all be free some day.
Deep in my heart, I do believe,
We shall overcome some day.

We are not afraid, we are not afraid,
We are not afraid, today.
Deep in my heart I do believe,
We shall overcome some day.

We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
We shall overcome some day.
Deep in my heart, I do believe.
We shall overcome some day.

An earlier version of this song "I'll Be Allright" was brought from Charleston, South Carolina to the Highlander Center in Tennessee in 1945 by some older black women who had just been involved in a large strike. During the strike and later at Highlander, the song was changed around and verses added. Guy Carawan, who has long been associated with the Highlander Center, popularized "We Shall Overcome" and brought it to the early struggles of the Civil Rights movement. Recognized as the anthem of the Civil Rights movement this song has been sung all over the world by many types of people including labor groups where it originated.

Source: Seeger, Pete and Robert Reiser. *Carry It On*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

Benjamin Harrison Fletcher

The Sentences Are Too Long

Benjamin Harrison Fletcher was a black dockworker who led the 1913 campaign of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) to organize black and white Philadelphia longshore workers into the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union. The goal was to organize all waterfront workers regardless of race or craft.

At that time, many people were convinced that black and white skilled and unskilled workers could not work together. But Fletcher, who was one of the I.W.W.'s best organizers, successfully organized black and white workers into one union. Local 3 of the Marine Transport Workers was organized within a few months and conducted a strike for better conditions in May, 1913.

A combination of 3,000 Black, Slavic, Polish, and Italian workers won most of their demands, including recognition of the union and wages of thirty cents an hour. Fletcher said, "that after many unsuccessful attempts to use scabs, police, bribery, and race prejudice to break our ranks, the shipping trust was forced to surrender to the solidarity of labor."

The Wobblies continued organizing longshore workers up and down the Atlantic coast. Benjamin Fletcher headed that drive which was cut short in 1918 when one-hundred Wobblies were tried and convicted for anti-war activities during World War I. Fletcher was also convicted and sentenced to ten years in jail even though he was not thought to be a part of those activities. At the time, Fletcher remarked about the judge's harsh

sentence that; "Judge Landis is using poor English today; he sentences are too long." He also said; "If it wasn't for me, there would be no color in this trial at all." Many labor people and many black organizations believed Fletcher was convicted because he was so effective at organizing black and white workers and getting them to work together.

Several black newspapers, W.E.B. DuBois, the scholar and national leader, and A. Philip Randolph, President of The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters,organized to get Benjamin Fletcher released from prison. At this time in American History few people supported individuals like Fletcher. However, because of the support generated for Fletcher's release, President Warren G. Harding commuted his sentence in 1923. And later, in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt granted him a full pardon.

After he left prison, Fletcher continued to work for industrial unionism. He dreamed of forming a Negro Labor Federation of some four million black workers. As he saw it, this group would be able to pressure unions into accepting black workers. Although he died without reaching that goal, Benjamin Harrison Fletcher accomplished much for working people. He spent his life helping workers to see how much they had in common. His leadership and vision helped workers see that if they cooperated with one another and didn't let race prejudice divide them, they could improve their working conditions.

Historical Background

The I. Justrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) was an organization which was born in 1905 mostly out of the struggles of workers in the Western part of the United States and Canada. These workers were migrant farm laborers who picked crops, lumberjacks who worked in isolated logging camps, and the so-called "hard-rock miners" who mined lead, silver, and copper.

Not all the Wobblies were in the West. Some of their most important struggles took place in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. One of the most important I.W.W. unions was organized by Ben Fletcher among the dockworkers in Philadelphia.

The Wobblies displayed a wonderful spirit. They loved to tell jokes, sing songs and act out skits on street corners. But their songs and jokes had a purpose. That purpose was to organize all workers into one big union that would not exclude any race, be open to both men and women, and bring justice to all workers.

During World War I, when the United States joined Great Britain and France in a war against Germany, the I.W.W. did not want to support the

war. But the American government passed a law that said that all citizens had to support the government, and many members of the I.W.W. went to jail and were persecuted for their beliefs.

Wobblies, as the members of the I.W.W. were called, were picked up in the middle of the night in Arizona by sheriffs and possees and taken in railroad cars out to the desert, dropped off, and suffered from no food and water. Wobblies elsewhere were lynched, shot and persecuted until their movement was destroyed.

Usually in the American system of justice people were punished for criminal actions not for their beliefs. We are a country that normally protects the right of people or groups to consider any ideas. But sometimes we have not always lived up to our own ideals, and this was an example of a time when we did not.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

1. Why is it important for people to be able to express unpopular ideas?

2. Why did Benjamin Fletcher say, except for him the trial would have had no color?

3. The following is one of the most famous skits that the Wobblies used to act out on street corners. The class might also enjoy acting out this skit:

Nuthouse News

A Skit Prepared by Work Peoples' College

Drama Department

Scene: Fence with gate in it. Fence extends across stage; gateway near middle. Arch over gateway reads "NUT HOUSE"; sign suspended from center of it: "No Nuts Allowed Except by Special Permission." The audience gets an eyeful of this before Hobo comes sauntering in, singing, "Hallelujah, I'm a bum."

Hobo sees butt of cigarette on walk. Picks it up and starts re-rolling it for a smoke as Nut comes along inside fence, slowly wheeling a wheelbarrow upside down. The Hobo watches the Nut and laughs.

NUT: What are you laughing at?

HOBO: You.
NUT: What's so funny about me?
HOBO: You've got your wheelbarrow upside down.
NUT: What's wrong with that?
HOBO: You can't put anything in it when it's upside down.
NUT: That's why I keep it that way. If I turn it the other way up, people may put something in it.
HOBO: You're not so crazy! What did they put you in for?
NUT: I used to keep my barrow right-side up like you nuts.
HOBO: How come they put in for that?
NUT: They used to fill it up that high with bricks.
HOBO: They can't put you in for that.
NUT: Well, I used to take my cloths off when at work.
HOBO: What did you do that for?
NUT: I figured that if I had to work like a horse, I might as well look like one, too.
HOBO: No—not so nutty after all.
NUT: Did you ever run one of these things? (Indicating barrow)
HOBO: Often—I'm an expert on that thing.
NUT: Which side did you keep up?
HOBO: I kept the other side up.
NUT: I'll bet that made it hard work—but if that was the right way to run it, why didn't you keep on running it?
HOBO: The job blew up.
NUT: An explosion?
HOBO: No—it got finished. We did all the work. There wasn't anything more to do. We worked ourselves out of a job.
NUT: You should have run it like I run mine. Where are you going now?
HOBO: I'm going downtown to see if I can find some breakfast.
NUT: I ate mine a couple of hours ago. Where are you going to get it?
HOBO: I don't know, but I'll get it somewhere likely.
NUT: I think you're crazy. Where are you going to eat dinner?
HOBO: I don't know. If I can't get it in this town, I'll get it in some other town.
NUT: I get mine at sharp noon everyday. You must be goofy. Where are you going to sleep tonight?
HOBO: I don't know. Last night I found a pretty good reefer.
NUT: What's a reefer?
HOBO: It's a box car with double walls, and an icebox in each end for keeping things frozen.
NUT: And you think that's a pretty good place to sleep? I always sleep in a nice, soft, warm, clean bed.

NUT: Quick—before the guard comes—give me a hand and we'll turn this sign around.

HOBO: Maybe we ought to..

NUT: No—we can't do it now—I see the guard coming, and he won't let us.

HOBO: Don't those guards ever get afraid of you nuts?

NUT: No—I asked him once and he said that even if there were a thousand of us nuts and only four guards, they still wouldn't be afraid of us.

HOBO: Why?

NUT: He said it was because nuts never organize.

—CURTAIN—

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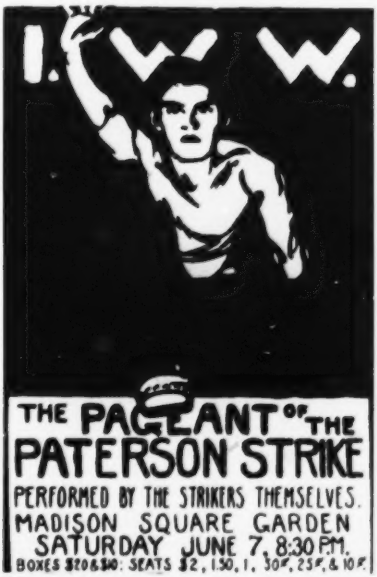

I. W. W.
THE PAGEANT OF THE
PATERSON STRIKE
PERFORMED BY THE STRIKERS THEMSELVES.
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
SATURDAY JUNE 7, 8:30 P.M.
BOXES $20 & $10. SEATS $2, 1.50, 1, 50¢, 25¢, & 10¢

The Spirit of Phil Murray

— Roscoe MacDonald

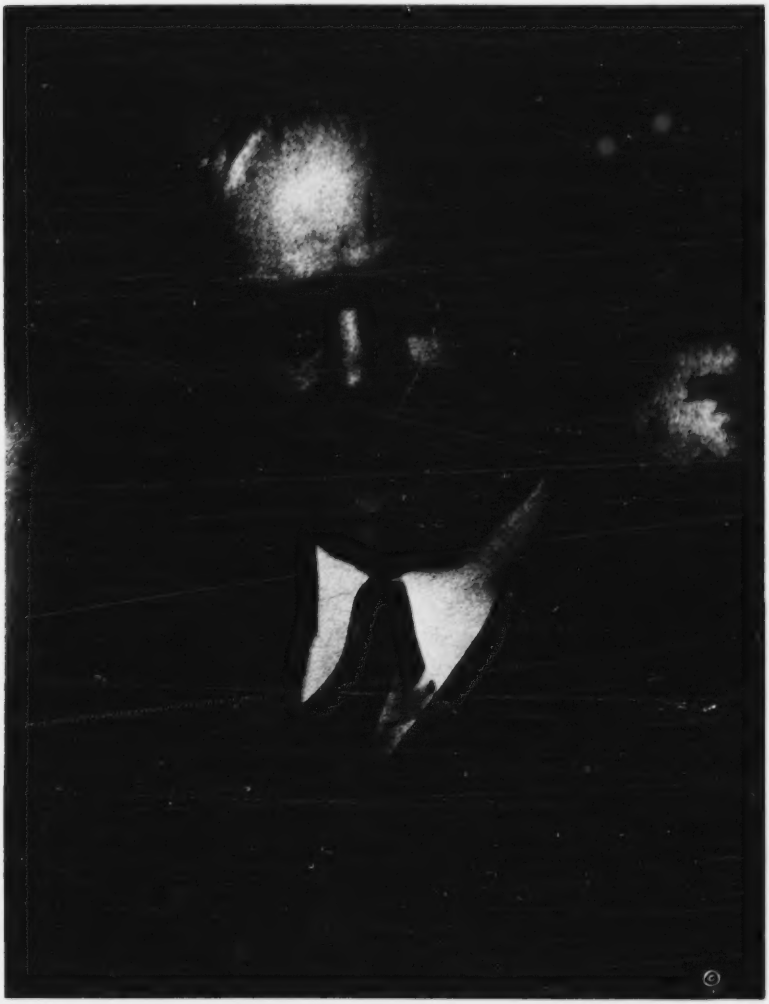
CHORUS: Let the spirit of Phil Murray live on and on
Just let his spirit live right on.
Let the spirit of Phil Murray live on and on
God has called Mr. Murray home.
Let the spirit of Phil Murray live on and on
Just let his spirit live right on.
Let the spirit of Phil Murray live on and on
God has called Mr. Murray home.

Well, in nineteen hundred and forty-two
Labor leaders didn't know exactly what to do.
Mr. Murray smiled, said, "I'll be your friend;
I'll fight for the right of the working men.
Well, when I die, I want to be straight,
Where I can enter my God's pearly gates."
Now every working man in this land
Don't forget the deeds of this wonderful man.

Well, in nineteen hundred and fifty-two
God called Mr. Murray, said, "Your work is through
Your labor on earth has been so hard
Come up high and get your reward.
You been loved by everyone most
You fought a good fight, you finished your course."
Now the people in the land, they began to worry
When they received the message they lost Phil Murray
The Congress (of) Industrial Organizations assembled.
The whole world began to tremble.
Men, women, and children cried
When they heard the sad news Mr. Murray had died.
He was the CIO's loss but he's heaven's gain
The day of resurrection we'll see him again.
Now good God almighty, our best friend is gone
I want you boys to help me just to sing this song.

With the death of C.I.O. President Phil Murray in 1952, a traditional gospel quartet called the "Sterling Jubilee Singers" took on the name of the "CIO Singers" and recorded this tribute to their leader. Written by one of the group's members Roscoe MacDonald, it fits a classic call and response structure often utilized in gospel music.

Source: Spottswood, Richard K. and Richard A. Reuss. Notes to *Songs of Labor and Livelihood;* an Lp. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1978.



James Jones

The Spirit of Phil Murray Lives On

Philip Murray was the first President of the United Steelworkers' of America and also the President of the Congress of Industrial Organizations from 1940 to 1952. His leadership inspired many lesser known leaders. As the song says, the spirit of Phil Murray lives on and on. One of those who was inspired by Phil Murray was James Jones who was one of the first black steelworkers Murray appointed to the union staff.

James Jones worked in a steel mill in Philadelphia during World War II. At that time, black workers could only have the unskilled jobs; jobs like electrician and engineer were closed to them. So James decided to go to school at night to prepare for an electrician's job, and he encouraged his fellow black workers to do the same.

Steel mills had trains in the mill to move the steel and heavy equipment. One day a black man came to James and said, "I worked on the railroad for twenty-six years, but here in the steel mill, every time they need a new engineer, they ask me to show him how to do the job. When I have taught him how to run the engine, then I have to climb down out of the cab and let this white man run the engine while I go back to my unskilled job. I'm tired of it!" James said, "I don't blame you. I think this is a good time for us to see if we can't ask the union to protest this."

James had been elected chairman of a union committee to see that workers were treated fairly on the job; it was called the grievance committee. A grievance committee looks into complaints that workers have and tries to solve them with the company. If it can't be worked out, then an arbitrator is chosen to settle the matter. An arbitrator is someone chosen by both the union and the company who will listen to labor and management and then make a decision that both sides must accept. This process is called the grievance procedure, and it is one of the most important things that unions do to see that workers are treated fairly.

James went to the company representatives and told them that the union didn't think it was fair for this man to be denied the opportunity to run the engine just because he was black. The company said they would like to hire the black man but the rest of the workers in the mill would stop working if they did. James said, "For any man that stops working, the union will see to it that there is a black man ready to do that job."

So finally the company agreed to let the black man run the engine and be an engineer. This man wasn't on the job for more than three weeks when there was a bad ice storm and the brakes on the engine froze up. And the same workers who thought that they couldn't work with a black man had learned to respect his ability to do that job. Those men were out in zero cold weather helping the black engineer to get the engine running again.

James said, "It just went to prove that once they saw he could do the job and that he was there to stay, they would treat him the same as anybody else." After a while, James was able to get black workers into every kind of job and in every department of the steel mill.

James Jones later founded the Negro Trade Union Leadership Council. One of the things the Council did was to start a school to train black workers to be able to perform all kinds of skilled jobs. That school has trained and placed black workers in many good jobs all over the city of Philadelphia. Eventually James was asked to go to Washington, D.C. to serve on a board called the National Advisory Commission on Civil Rights. When James retired from the Steelworkers' Union in 1977, he was hailed by both white and black labor leaders as a man who had done so much for black workers in this country.

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John Chorey

Another leader who was inspired by Philip Murray was a Slovak worker named John Chorey. His parents came to this country from Czechoslovakia, but John was born in the United States in 1905. His father worked in a nail mill in Donora, Pennsylvania. Times were so hard that his father could not support his family on what he earned in the nail mill, so he sent his wife and children back to Czechoslovakia to stay with their grandparents. When John arrived at his grandparents' home, he was nine years old; he could speak English but not Slovak.

He had a hard time at first because the children in school teased him. To help his mother he had to take care of all the pigs in the village and keep them from running in the farmers' fields and tearing up their crops. For that he ate in the farmers' homes and received one bushel of wheat a year to give his mother. The other children in the village teased him because he took care of the pigs.

One day a rich man in the village asked John if he would like to take care of the cows instead. He would pay him twenty-five cents a day. There were several boys who took care of the cows. It was John's job to blow the horn to tell the people to bring out their cows and then the boys would herd them from one place to another to graze. This story may remind you of the nursery rhyme, "Little Boy Blue, Come Blow Your

Horn, The Sheeps in the Meadow, The Cows in the Corn." That nursery rhyme is about a boy who had a job just like the one John had.

But John was unhappy to have so little money to take home to his mother. He remembered that his father had taught him that if you are treated unfairly you should all get together and strike and refuse to work. So John persuaded all the boys who took care of the cows to go on strike until the rich man agreed to pay them seventy-five cents a day. One day during the harvest time, all the boys hid in the woods and John, getting up all his courage, went to tell the rich man that they would not come back until he agreed to raise their wages. The rich man had to agree if he wanted the villagers to harvest his crops. After that, John was a hero to the other boys.

When John was seventeen, his father told him he should come back to the United States and make a better life for himself. So in 1922 he returned to America and went to work in a steel mill. They called him "Yankee Greener" because while he was born in America, he was like an immigrant, because at seventeen he had forgotten how to speak English.

In 1935 he met Philip Murray. Murray said to him, "John, I need you to help organize the Slovak workers like your father tried to do in the nail mill." John said, "What do you want me to do?" Murray said, "Get all the workers together at the Polish Hall and we will speak to them." John did that, and later he became the treasurer of his local union.

From then on whenever Philip Murray needed a good organizer he called on John Chorey. Chorey was sent to organize in Ohio and in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and many other places. John Chorey called Philip Murray "Uncle Phil" to show how much he respected him. One day he told him, "Uncle Phil, I will go where you send me and try to help my fellow workers because my father taught me that the union was for the workers, and I can see that you are also for the workers."

Historical Background

Philip Murray was born in Scotland in 1886. He came to the United States with his father when he was 16 years old, and they both got jobs in the coal mines in western Pennsylvania. Philip Murray became a leader in the United Mine Workers' Union and by 1934 he was a vice president of the union.

The President of the Mine Workers' Union was John L. Lewis. He and Philip both felt that for unions to be successful they would have to organize everyone who worked for a particular company like the coal miners did. At that time, the major union federation in the United States was the American Federation of Labor. It was an organization that emphasized organizing workers by the skill or craft which they had, so

that all the bricklayers would be in one union and all the carpenters in another and all the plumbers in another, and so on. But industry was no longer organized like that. By the 1900s there were many large companies that employed workers with all sorts of skills. They needed to be organized in one union in order not to be separated and divided against one another; but instead to be united into one organization.

Many labor leaders began to see that they needed to change the way they organized workers, and Philip Murray and John L. Lewis became the leaders of this group. They formed a new organization called the Congress of Industrial Organizations or C.I.O. Philip Murray was put in charge of organizing the steelworkers' union.

The C.I.O. organized tire factories, steel mills, automobile factories, mines and shipyards as well as many other workplaces. In order to do this, it split away from the American Federation of Labor and became a separate federation. In 1940, Philip Murray took John L. Lewis' place as President of the C.I.O. During World War II, he supported the war effort to keep the armed forces supplied with tanks and guns in order to win the war as quickly as possible.

Philip Murray died on November 9, 1952 as he was preparing to open the National Convention of the C.I.O. His death was mourned by diplomats and politicians. His death was also mourned by workers everywhere, especially by the coalminers and steelworkers for whom he had fought so hard. In 1955 the A.F.L. and the C.I.O. reunited. Today the labor federation is called the AFL-CIO.

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Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

1. Why did unions need to organize all the workers that worked in a single factory into one union instead of organizing workers by the craft or skill that they had?

2. Invite a speaker from the A. Phlip Randolph Institute or the Negro Trade Union Leadership Council to come to speak to your class about their activities.

3. Try forming a grievance committee in your classroom. Select three or four students to be on the committee. They can listen to ideas about some changes they would like to make in your room. Select several other students to represent management. If the grievance committee and the management committee are unable to agree, the teacher can serve as the arbitrator.

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Union Maid

—Woody Guthrie

There once was a union maid;
She never was afraid
Of goons and ginks and company finks
And the deputy sheriffs that made the raid.
She went to the union hall
When a meeting it was called,
And when the company boys came 'round
She always stood her ground.

CHORUS: Oh, you can't scare me, I'm sticking
to the union
I'm sticking to the union, I'm sticking
to the union
Oh, you can't scare me, I'm sticking
to the union
I'm sticking to the union till the day
I die.

This union maid was wise
To the tricks of company spies;
She couldn't be fooled by company stools;
She always went to organize.
She always got her way
When she struck for higher pay;
She'd show her card to the National Guard
And this is what she'd say:

(Contemporary trade unionists have added the following verse to the song.)

We modern union maids are also not afraid,
To walk the line, leave jobs behind
An we're not just the ladies aid,
We fight for equal pay, and we will have our say,
We're workers too, the same as you, and fight the union way.

1961 and 1963 Ludlow Music, Inc., New York, N.Y. used by permission.

Woody Guthrie's "Union Maid" is the best known song about women in the labor movement. As Pete Seeger reported: "We were in Oklahoma City in 1940 at a union meeting. Many of the men had brought their wives. The company had sent around some toughs to intimidate the workers. But the workers held their ground." The next morning Woody typed out "Union Maid" to the tune of "Redwing." "Union Maid" quickly became, and remains, one of the most popular union songs.

Source: Seeger, Pete and Robert Reiser. *Carry It On*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

Mary Callahan

The Riot Act

Mary Callahan said she was one of those people who "can get around on a broom when everyone else has to take a cab." She made that joke because she was born on Halloween in the year 1914 and because some people called her a witch because she worked so hard to get benefits and help for women workers.

Mary was born into a family of factory workers. Her mother worked in the mills in Philadelphia that made silk stockings. Mary worked in candy factories and at the ten-cent store. She got married and started to raise a family when she was quite young. But then a tragic event changed her life; her young husband was killed in an automobile accident and she was left a widow with a baby to support when she was just nineteen. Many years later she would tell young working women:

> Don't think you are working just temporarily, you never know may happen. My mother worked in the hosiery mills to make a better life; I had to go back to work because I was widowed. Most women will spend most of their lives working for wages, so you better think about making that job as comfortable and secure as you would try to make your home.

This was the speech that Mary would make many times, to the women who worked with her in the factory making radios. Later her work in the union would carry her to high places, even to the White House, where Mary made the same plea on behalf of women workers.

Mary worked on such issues as day care centers for the children of working mothers. During World War II, Mary was successful in getting day care centers established and a program that provided hot meals from the cafeteria for women to take home to their families. The war made it patriotic for women to work in factories so men could go to war. They were "the women behind the men with the guns." Sometimes they were nicknamed "Rosie the Riveter."

Mary continued her activity on behalf of women workers, and in 1961 she was appointed to the National Commission on the Status of Women.

where she served for four years. The Commission made recommendations to the President of the United States on all aspects that affect women, from child care to Social Security.

About ten years after Mary was widowed, she met a man through her union work, and they were married. Her new husband encouraged her to continue her efforts for working people, so not too long after World War II Mary found herself a part of a large group of strikers milling about in front of the gates to a large electric plant in Philadelphia. Mary was an officer in the union. The deputy sheriff appeared with a large group of policemen mounted on horses. He read what's called the "Riot Act" to the group. That's an act which says that large groups must not picket and must disperse and go home. But Mary did not know what the Riot Act was. All she knew was that when she was a little girl, if she was naughty, her mother would say, "You just wait, your father's going to read the Riot Act to you."

So when the union leaders called out "women and veterans to the front," Mary pushed her way to the front with an American Flag. She wanted to show that the union was determined to get better conditions for the workers. The sheriff read the Riot Act, but nobody moved or dispersed.

Then the police began to ride into the crowd, swinging their clubs, and Mary and all the others ran. The policemen rode their horses right up onto the porches of the houses. Mary was running when a lady opened her door and said, "Come on in, you'll be safe here." She said she didn't work at the plant, but she couldn't see people being chased down like that. So she let Mary and several others in her house where they would be safe. Then they went out her back door into the yard.

But all the time Mary was running, she felt this fluttering in her stomach, "Ye Gods, I must be scared!" When she got home that night she still felt the mysterious fluttering. Her husband said, "Mary, maybe you should go to see a doctor. You shouldn't have been right up front like that, putting yourself in danger."

So Mary took his advice and went to the doctor. He said, "Mary, you are going to have a baby; you are three months pregnant!" Mary said, "Some way to find out, by having cops chasing me on a horse!" Mary had another son, and she brought both sons up to fight for what for what they thought was right.

Mary continued to work for day care centers for working mothers, for equal treatment on the job, for the right to bid on the higher paid jobs which had always been reserved for men, and for more opportunities for women to be leaders in their unions.

Historical Background

During World War II, both the A.F.L. and the C.I.O. unions organized many workers. At the start of the war, nine million workers belonged to unions. At the end of the war, there were fifteen million workers in unions, including many women who had gone to work in the defense plants. Women played an important role in war production and showed that they could do the jobs that men had been doing.

The government had many agencies to oversee relations between labor and management. The unions pledged not to strike or ask for higher wages during the war so that the production of war materials for the soldiers at the front would not stop.

One of the wartime government agencies was the Office of Price Administration. Its job was to keep the price of goods and services down during the war. But there were not enough people working in the agency to really see that prices would not go up. But every employer was naturally interested in keeping wages at the same level.

After the war, the unions felt that their wages had not gone up with the increase in prices. As soon as the war was over, workers wanted wage increases. In the first two years after World War II, there were more than ten thousand strikes. That is more strikes in a two-year period than there had ever been before and more than there has ever been since then. There were strikes in all major industries: mining, auto, steel and the electrical industry where Mary Callahan worked. The unions showed that they would continue to fight for better wages and working conditions for their members, now that the war was won.

Women workers have become more active in unions since World War II and most recently have formed an organization called The Coalition of Labor Union Women. Mary Callahan was one of the founders of this organization. She believed that women working together could make a better life for themselves and their families. She also believed that unions would benefit from the active leadership of their women members.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Activities

1. Interview several women who work outside the home. Find out how they feel about equal pay for equal work. Ask them to describe their jobs and how they feel about the need for child care. Then report to the class.

2. Many women today are working at jobs that in times past only men held. How do you feel about this?

3. There are now many organizations to help women. To name a few, The National Organization of Women; Women for WAJE (Women's Alliance for Job Equity), 1422 Chestnut Street, Suite 1100, Philadelphia, PA. 19102; 9to5, National Association of Working Women, 1224 Huron Road, Cleveland, OH. 44115; CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women), 15 Union Square, New York, N.Y. 10003. Perhaps you could invite a representative from one of these organizations to speak to your class.

Sources

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Solidarity Forever

— traditional

— Ralph Chaplin

When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun.
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one?
But the union makes us strong.

CHORUS: Solidarity forever!
Solidarity forever!
Solidarity forever!
For the union makes us strong.

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel could turn.
We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn
That the union makes us strong.

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold,
Greater than the might of armies magnified a thousand fold.
We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old,
For the union makes us strong.

Written in 1905 by Ralph Chaplin, this is the best known song of the great number that were contributed by the Industrial Workers of the World(I.W.W.). Written to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," this song remains labor's anthem and can be heard today in union halls, at rallies and on picket lines. "Solidarity" usually brings a union group to its feet.

Source: Seeger, Pete and Robert Reiser. *Carry It On.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

Glossary

Administering. The act of managing an organization.

AFL-CIO. American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organization.

American Revolution. The war between Great Britain and her American colonies in 1775-1783 which resulted in their independence and the creation of the United States of America.

Apprentice. A worker who is learning a skill.

Arbitration. A method of settling a disagreement between a union and an employer over a job grievance or the interpretation of a clause in their contract.

Awl. A sharp pointed tool to make holes in leather or wood.

Beggar. A person who gets food or money by asking for it.

Benevolent. An institution or person who wishes to do good for others.

Bewailing. Expressing grief or sorrow. Crying loudly.

Blacksmith. A worker who works with iron or metal, especially one who makes horse shoes.

Blast furnance. A furnace that melts metal into blocks or shapes.

Board. Can mean an official group to direct or oversee an activity.

Bondage. Being a captive or slave.

Breaker. Machinery in a tall structure to lift and sort coal.

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. A union representing the porters who worked on the railroads when trains carried cars in which the passengers could sleep in special bunks which were built into the railroad cars. Most of these porters were black men.

Central Labor Union. A federation of local unions in a city or a county which represents the labor movement at the local level.

Child Labor Laws. Laws to regulate or prevent small children from working for an employer.

Civil Rights. Rights to personal liberty established by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Civil War. The war between the North and South in 1861-1865. As a result of this war, slavery was ended in the United States. Any war between groups within a single country.

Coalition of Labor Union Women. An organization established in 1974 to advance the interests of working women within the unions.

Commissioned. Given the authority to act.

Commuted. A penalty or jail sentence reduced.
Craft unionism. Unions where membership is based on a particular skill such as carpentry or plumbing.
Cripple. A lame person who has lost all or part of his arms or legs.
Delegate. A person sent to a meeting to represent others.
Desolate. Sadly empty and lacking hope.
Determine. Decide or choose.
Disaster. A bad event which causes death and destruction.
Dispersed. Scattered, caused to go away.
Displaced. Put out of the usual or proper place or removed from a job.
Docked. Wages removed from a paycheck.
Economic depression. A period in which there is a decline in business and few opportunities to find jobs.
Electrician. A person who installs or maintains electrical equipment.
Embarassed. Confused or ashamed.
Engineer. A person who runs an engine.
Exploitation. The selfish act of using someone to gain profit.
Fife. A high pitched flute.
Foundry. A place where metal is melted to make forms for articles made out of metal.
Ginks and Finks. Slang names for traitors to the union cause.
Goon. A hoodlum hired by management during a dispute.
Grievance. A complaint a worker, a union, or a manager has concerning violation of a work practice or contract provision.
Haughty. Proud, "stuckup."
Hosiery worker. A worker who makes stockings.
Illegal. Against the law.
Immigrant. A person who comes to another country from the country where he/she was born to live in the new country.
Industrial unionism. Unions where membership is based on the place where you work and not on the kind of job you have. In industrial unions, all the workers in a particular plant can belong to the same union.
Inflation. A situation when there is more money than goods or services which results in high prices.
Interurban trainmen. There used to be one-car trolleys which went from one town to another and the drivers and conductors of these trolleys were called "Interurban trainmen."
Intimidate. To make someone afraid to do something.
Investigation. A search or inquiry.
Journeyman. A worker who has learned a skill but works for wages from an employer.

Labor Contract. A document which is signed by employers and employees or their representatives which spells out the wages, hours and conditions of work and can be enforced by courts of law.

Labor Movement. The ideas and actions which taken together inspire the advancement of workers who are organized into unions.

Ladle. A cup or bowl on a long handle used to carry liquids.

Laid-off. Discharged from a job due to a lack of work.

Lamentation. Crying.

Legislators. Those who make laws.

Longshore workers. Workers who load and unload ships.

Lumberjack. A person who works cutting down trees and making them into boards.

Lynched. Hanged without a trial.

Maimed. Hurt and injured.

Master. A skilled craftsperson who owns the shop and employs other workers.

Migrant. One who travels from place to place.

Molders. Workers who work in a foundry.

Mourned. Expressed sorrow or grief.

Nail Mill. A factory where nails are made.

National Labor Relations Act. An Act passed in 1935 to permit workers to choose a union to represent them if they voted to do so.

Opportunity. Chance.

Organize. To build or form a union by persuading the workers to join the union.

Outskirts. The area around a town.

Pardon. To stop a penalty and excuse it.

Pay equity. Wages based on a principal of fairness or equal pay for equal work.

Persecute. To go after a person or group to harm them.

Picket. To stand or march by a place of employment to let the public know there is a labor dispute in progress.

Plantation. A place where workers both live and work, usually to harvest cotton or tobacco.

Pledge. Promise.

Prejudice. To have an unfavorable opinion or feeling without knowledge or thought.

Production. The act of making something of value by working on it.

Prosperity. Good fortune, financial success.

Recommendation. An act to urge acceptance of a person or thing.

Reform. Improve.

Resurrection. Rise from the dead.

Scabs. A worker who refuses to join or act with a union.

Scale. A devise for weighing objects as in weighing the amount of coal mined.

Shaft. A sloping or vertical passageway into a mine.

Sizing. To separate or sort by size.

Spinning room. A room which contains the machinery to draw fibers into thread or yarn.

Spool. To wind thread on a spool or wooden cylinder with a hole in the center.

Status. Position.

Stools. Those who act as spys and report the activities of their fellow workers to the employer.

Street musicians. Musicians who play on the street for the coins which passersby may give them.

Strike. Workers join together and stop work to win better conditions and wages from an employer.

Subterranean. Underground.

Suffocated. To die due to lack of air to breathe.

Suffrage. The act of voting or the right to vote.

Supreme Court. The highest court in the United States.

Textiles. Cloth.

T-planch. A form to make nails.

Trade Union. A union of workers who have the same kind of skills. Sometimes used to mean any organization of workers.

Trap Boy. A boy who sits by the doors in a mine which control the amount of air in a mine and opens and closes them to admit the miners, mules and coal wagons.

Traversed. Crossed or passed across.

Unconstitutional. A law which can't be kept because it is judged to be contrary to the constitution of the country.

Union. An organization of workers who unite to gain better conditions at their workplace.

Wash boiler. Clothes used to be washed in a large metal tub which could be put on a fire and boiled so that they would get clean.

Wizard. Someone who practices magic.

World War I. A world-wide conflict fought between Germany and its allies and Great Britain and the United States and its allies between 1914 and 1918 in which great Britain and the United States won.

World War II. A world-wide conflict resulting from World War I fought between Germany and its allies and the United States and its allies from 1939-1945. The German leader was Adolph Hitler and he was defeated.

For The Teacher

Notes On The Songs of Unsung Heroes and Heroines

by

Tom Juravich

> Songs are the statements of a people. You can learn more about people by listening to their song than in any other way, for into songs go all the hopes and hurts, the angers, fears, the wants and aspirations.
>
> —John Steinbeck

Introduction

The songs in this collection, like the stories and biographies written by Alice Hoffman, describe the lives of unsung labor heroes and heroines. In many instances the songs are among the fragments that remain of a life, of a time, and of a people. They often convey a clearer sense of history than is available in any other source.

The songs in this collection represent different time periods and work experiences. Songs like "Peg and Awl" and "Factory Girl," come from early American experiences, when the factory system was first being introduced in the United States. "The Blind Fiddler" and "Babies in the Mill," continue that story and speak to the human costs of the factory system as it developed.

Although many of the songs could be sung about experiences in different parts of the country, a number of them come from Pennsylvania and its early industries. Traditional songs like "The Avondale Mine Disaster" and "A Miner's Life" and the recently written "Breaker Boy," come from the coal industry that played an important role in Pennsylvania's industrial development.

The emergence of labor organizations representing American working people is described in this collection. While the "Spirit of Phil Murray" pays tribute to one of Pennsylvania's great labor leaders, Woody Guthrie's "Union Maid" is a song for all women—workers, wives and mothers—who played an under appreciated role in the development of the labor movement. The anthem "We Shall Overcome" recognizes how the Civil Rights movement and labor organizations worked together.

The songs also represent a variety of musical styles and traditions of working people. "The Avondale Mine Disaster," is a classic ballad, drawing from the early immigration of the Irish to the coal regions of Pennsylvania. "Babies in the Mill" and "A Miner's Life," are characteristic of a Southern musical style, and although related to the Anglo-Irish tradition, exhibit American modifications on that style.

"The Spirit of Phil Murray" and "We Shall Overcome" although different in some ways, both come from the black tradition. "Phil Murray," draws from a more developed Gospel tradition of ensemble singing, while "We Shall Overcome," takes more of a ballad form.

Together these songs create a portrait of the working women and men who over the past 300 years, have struggled to create a better life for themselves and for their children. That the days of "breaker boys" and "babies in the mills," are no longer with us is a testimony to their efforts.

Read The Songs

Whether you have a tape recording of the songs, or not, begin each lesson by reading or having a student read the song as poetry. What kind of music would they imagine goes with these words?

Play The Songs

Play the songs after reading the text, or maybe both before and afterwards. How are the songs and text related?

Sing The Songs

The songs have been recorded to facilitate learning by ear. When played on a stereo tape recorder, the instrumental background will appear on Channel A, while the vocals will be heard on Channel B. By adjusting the balance control on the machine, first let the students listen to the song with strong vocals. As they become more familiar with the song, the vocals can be phased out and the students can sing along with the accompaniment.

Begin with one of the easier songs like "Union Maid," or "Peg and Awl," and work up to some of the more difficult ones. Perhaps your music teachers would be willing to help you out. Maybe they could spend some of their class time teaching the students the songs. Pete Seeger and Robert Reiser's book *Carry It On* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985) contains the sheet music to a number of the songs, and its modest price makes it a worthwhile addition to a school library.

Compare And Contrast The Songs

The songs in this collection represent a diversity of musical, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the questions for discussion might include:

Who is working in the songs?

How do the songs depict work?

How are different work experiences reflected in the songs?

Who is singing the songs?

What cultural/ethnic traditions do the songs come from?

How do the songs compare melodically, rhythmically or in terms of structure? (Your music teachers can help here.)

Compare the songs to contemporary ones. Can students identify similar themes? Why? Why not?

Stage A Production

For a class project or assembly why not stage a production? Have students read or act out part of the text interspersed with songs so that students can sing along.

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